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BEING A CHRISTIAN.

PHILLIPS BROOKS.

I say to my friend, "Be a Christian." That means to be a full man. And he says to me, "I have not time to be a Christian. I have not room. If my life was not so full. You don't know how hard I work from morning to night. What time is there for me to be a Christian? What time is there; what room is there for Christianity in such a life as mine?" But does not it come to seem to us so strange, so absurd, if it was not so melancholy, that man should say such a thing as that? It is as if the engine had said it had no room for the steam. It is as if the tree had said it had no room for the sap. It is as if the ocean had said it had no room for the tide. It is as if the man said that he had no room for his soul. It is as if life said that it had no time to live, when it is life. It is not something that is added to life. It is life. A man is not living without it. And for a man to say that "I am so full in life that I have no room for life," you see immediately to what absurdity it reduces itself. And how a man knows what he is called upon by God's voice, speaking to him every hour, speaking to him every moment, speaking to him out of everything, that which the man is called upon to do because it is the man's only life! Therefore time, room, that is what time, that is what room is for—life. Life is the thing we seek, and man finds it in the fulfilment of his life by Jesus Christ.

"Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God." So Jesus said to Nicodemus the ruler, Nicodemus the amateur in religions, who came and said: "Perhaps this teacher has something else that I can bind into my catalogue of truths and hold it." Jesus looked him in the face and said: "It is not that, my friend, it is not that; it is to be a new man, it is to be born again. It is to have the new life, which is the old life, which is the eternal life. So alone does man enter into the Kingdom of God." I cannot help believing all the time that if our young men knew this, religion would lift itself up and have a dignity and greatness—not a thing for weak souls, but a thing for the manliest soul.

I want to try to answer the question which I know is upon your hearts. "*What shall I do about this?*" I know you say, "Is this all in the clouds? Is there anything I can do in the right way?" If you are in earnest I shall try to tell you what I should do, if I were in your place, that I might enter into that life and be the free man that we have tried to describe, of whom we believe certain special and definite things. What are they?

In the *first* place I would *put away* my sin. There is not a man listening to me now who has not some trick of life, some habit that has possession of him, which he knows is a wrong thing. The very first thing for a man to do is absolutely to set himself against them. If you are foul, stop being licentious, at least stop doing licentious things. If you, in any part of your business, are tricky and unsound and unjust, cut that off, no matter what it costs you. There is something clear and definite enough for every man. It is as clear for every man as the sunlight that smites him in his eyes. Stop doing the bad thing which you are doing. It is drawing the bolt away to let whatever mercy may come in come in. Stop doing your sin. You can do that if you will. Stop doing your sin, no matter how mechanical it seems, and then take up your duty, whatever you can do to make the world more bright and good.

Secondly, do whatever you can to help every struggling soul, to add new strength to any staggering cause, the poor sick man that is by you, the poor wronged man whom you with your influence might vindicate, the poor boy in your shop that you may set with new hope upon the road of life that is beginning already to look dark to him. I cannot tell you what it is. But you know your duty. No man ever looked for it and did not find it.

And then the *third* thing—*pray*. Yes, go to the God whom you but dimly see and pray to Him in the darkness, where He seems to sit. Ask Him, as if He were, that He will give you that which, if He is, must come from Him, can come from Him alone. Pray anxiously. Pray passionately, in the simplest of all words, with the simplest of all thoughts. Pray, the manliest thing that a man can do, the fastening of his life to the eternal, the drinking of his thirsty soul out of the great fountain of life. And pray distinctly. Pray upon your knees. One grows tired sometimes of the free thought, which is yet perfectly true, that a man can pray anywhere and anyhow. But men have found it good to make the whole system pray. Kneel down, and the very bending of these obstinate and unused knees of yours will make the soul kneel down in the humility in which it can be exalted in the sight of God.

And *fourthly*, read your *Bible*. How cold that sounds. What, read a book to save my soul? Read an old story that my life in these new days shall be regenerated and saved? Yes, do just that, for out of that book, if you read it truly, shall come the divine and human person. If you can read it with your soul as well as with your eyes, there shall come the Christ there walking in Palestine. You shall see Him so much greater than the Palestine in which He walks that, at one word of prayer, as you bend over the illuminated page, there shall lift up that body-being of the Christ, and come down through the centuries and be your helper at your side. So read your Bible.

Fifthly, seek the *church*—oh, yes, the church. Do you think, my friends, you who stand outside the church and blame her for her inconsistencies, and tell of her shortcomings, and point out the corruptions that are in her history, all that are in her present life to-day—do you really believe that there is an earnest man in the church that does not know the church's weaknesses and faults just as well as you do? Do you believe that there is one of us living in the life and heart of the church who don't think with all his conscience, who don't in every day in deep distress and sorrow know how the church fails of the great life of the Master, how far she is from being what God meant she should be, what she shall be some day? But all the more I will put my life into that church, all the more I will drink the strength that she can give to me and make what humble contribution to her I can bring of the earnestness and faithfulness of my life. Come into the church of Jesus Christ. There is no other body on the face of the earth that represents what she represents—the noble destiny of the human soul, the great capacity of human faith, the inexhaustible and unutterable love of God, the Christ, who stands to manifest them all.

What will be the action of the Pan-Methodist Conference to be held in Washington next summer on the subject of Peace? Our friends of that communion in Great Britain and America should be wide awake.